

County History and Government

History of Montgomery County

It was more than 300 years ago when the first European settlers arrived in what is now Montgomery County, an area stretching from the mouth of Rock Creek in the south to the Monocacy River in the north, the Potomac River on the west and the Patuxent River on the east. They found evidence of the occupation of Indians of the Piscataway Confederation. It was a beautiful forested area rich in game that included deer, buffalo, bear and wild turkey, with rivers and streams teeming with fish. Captain John Smith of Virginia explored the Potomac River in 1608 and was the first European to map the area.

The first settlers to colonize the area were from England, Ireland and Wales. The first patent for land was recorded in 1688 for a tract along the banks of Rock Creek. Once here, the settlers quickly cleared much of the virgin forest to grow tobacco and food and to build homes.

Current County Government

Under the current system, the Executive submits yearly operating and construction budgets which the Council must approve. The Executive appoints the various department heads, and other County employees are part of the merit system.

Under the Charter, the County must submit to an independent annual audit, make centralized purchases and use competitive bidding.

The Council sits as a legislative body and initiates, repeals and amends local laws for the County as stated by the Express Powers Act. In addition, sitting as the District Council, the Council legislates in all areas of planning, zoning and land use. The Council cannot enact laws for any incorporated town, village, municipality or special taxing area on any matter covered by the powers granted to these jurisdictions.

In November 1986, the voters amended the Charter to increase the number of Council seats from seven to nine in the 1990 election. Five members are elected from geographical council districts and four are elected at large.

21st Century-Today

Montgomery County remains the most populous jurisdiction in the State of Maryland and is rapidly approaching the one million mark. Minority growth in the state of Maryland rose from 27 percent of the total population in 1990 to 40 percent in 2000. Almost half of Maryland's Hispanic

and Latino population resides in Montgomery County. Thirty percent of County residents are foreign-born.